

THOUGHTS ON BAPTISM
AND
MIXED COMMUNION,

IN
Three Letters to a Friend.

IN WHICH
SOME ANIMADVERSIONS ARE MADE

ON
The Rev. A. Booth's Apology.

—●—
BY A PÆDOBAPTIST.
—●—

*It is freely allowed, that a mistake which relates merely to
the mode and subject of Baptism, is comparatively small.*

Booth's Apology, p. 98.

For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body.

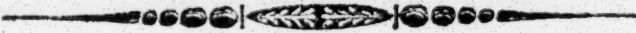
1 Cor. xii. 13.

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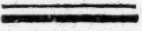
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THE Author submits the following Thoughts to the religious public with much deference, and a considerable degree of solicitude. But, if after a candid perusal, the christian reader should pass sentence upon them, no apology he could offer here would be sufficient. He wishes to do good—is a lover of good men, and would rejoice to see them more united. These desires gave existence to those Thoughts—the press hath given them birth, and the warmest wish of the writer is, that they may live no longer than they serve to promote the unity of the Spirit, in the bonds of peace and gospel purity.



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THOUGHTS ON BAPTISM

AND

MIXED COMMUNION.

L E T T E R I.

DEAR SIR,

AFTER what has been written by so many, and of late by such distinguished characters, on the subject of Baptism, it may seem a proof of temerity to rush forward and take a part in the controversy, so often, and so ably, handled. The fear of incurring this censure had nearly induced me to relinquish all thoughts of publication; but not having met with any writer whose thoughts have taken altogether the course here attempted, I have ventured to lay before you, and the public, the state of my apprehensions. The combatants have tried their full strength. Some

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have extended their researches into remote ages of antiquity, and took their stand with those *ancients* they deemed most venerable. Others have employed their *critical* learning, and reasoning powers, with much honour to themselves, and advantage to the cause they espoused. Some also, whose minds were mixed with lighter materials, have let fly the shafts of ridicule; I trow, for this goodly reason; because it is easier to laugh at an opponent, than to answer a weighty argument.—My object is to found a parley; to invite each side, as becometh christians, to agree in fellowship, although they differ on this subject. Surely it is time to confess that both can produce men of distinguished abilities, good learning, sound criticism, and great piety. It is, therefore, certainly just and right that each should act upon his own principles, without incurring from his brother, of different sentiments, the slightest opprobrium.

Each side hath been charged with making *too much* of Baptism; and, in proof that certain writers have done so, their own words, incautiously used in some parts of the controversy, have been triumphantly quoted. But that either side doth hold it essential to salvation; or mean any more than to contend in support of their practice as a part of christian worship, incumbent upon them to observe, is, I presume, what all candid persons will allow. The *Antipedobaptists* do, indeed, generally claim the exclusive privilege
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of being right, roundly asserting that immersion belongs to the very essence of the ordinance, inasmuch, that every thing, which relates to the administration of Baptism, is a nullity without it.—But there are many others of a different mind, who have some claim to be treated as men of understanding, integrity, and genuine christianity. The arguments they adduce are open to the examination of all who wish to investigate the subject. To state them here, and to argue at large that part of the controversy, belongs not to my design; nor do you ask it at my hands. I have only to assume, what I am persuaded you will readily grant, viz. That a *Pedobaptist* may be fully convinced that his practice, in those principles, is according to the sense of scripture. That *you* have no such conviction, I believe; but that no other man can, because you have not, I cannot persuade myself to think you will affirm. Yea, I am confident you will allow that the disputants on *our* side, as well as *yours*, may be very “*sincere in their professions of love to truth.*” Could I think otherwise, such an opinion would abate the ardour of my esteem, and weaken very much the regard I have for your person and character. *You* will, I have no doubt, allow it possible that a christian brother may be fully persuaded that *dipping* is not essentially requisite in the ordinance of baptism. If, as the ground of this conviction, he should lay before you a few of those reasons by which his mind is influenced, you will hear him

without prejudice. Perhaps, then, he will tell you, that after the most careful investigation of the subject, he is fully convinced that the terms βαπτίζω & βαπτισμός, as used in the holy scriptures, for *baptizing* and *baptism*, do not necessarily import immersion; or so indispensibly require that mode of washing, that no person can be deemed baptized, who hath not been plunged, or dipt all over in water.

It appears to him evident, that when the apostle speaks of being *buried with him by baptism into death*, and *risen with him through the faith of the operation of God*, he has an especial regard to the obligations of the baptized to die unto sin and live unto righteousness.—If there be any allusion at all in these words to the administration of the ordinance, it does not strike him as the *leading* idea. He must also take leave to say, that the *resemblance* doth not appear to him very strong between one man's *walking into the water*, and falling down under it, in the arms of another, and the *burial of a dead body*; especially that of our Lord's burial in a tomb, or an apartment hewn out of a rock. If the allusion be pertinent, and applicable to our mode of burial, it should seem most so, where an *infant* is taken into the arms and buried in the water. But, after the most mature reflection, he thinks that the apostle's reasoning on the place goes to establish and illustrate the nature of christian *obligations* and christian *privileges*; an entrance

trance into which is made by baptism. Now, my good Sir, if you hear him make these declarations on the subject, though you should pity his intellect, you will not accuse him of *wresting* the scriptures; which implies a perverse design, and which must, therefore, be inconsistent with integrity and uprightness. He admits it is a subject which has its difficulties, but is satisfied in his own views, as presenting the least to his mind; and thinks it *possible* you may err. If you think otherwise, you make a claim in which I cannot desire a partnership.

In truth, he thinks that the application of water to a proper subject, by any christian minister, *in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, is real baptism, whether it be by immersion, sprinkling, or pouring. As his reason for preferring the latter, he will add, it appears to him that the use of water in baptism plainly alludes to the purifying operation of the Holy Spirit, which is commonly set forth by sprinkling or pouring; *not dipping*. The conformity therefore of the representation with the thing signified, seems to point out the propriety of this manner of baptizing. If it is urged that being *buried with him* establishes the idea of dipping; he will reply, that, admitting the apostle introduces that term in reference to the *act* or *mode* of baptizing (of which he doubts), it will establish nothing *exclusively* in favour of dipping, seeing other allusions are introduced,

duced, and that *more frequently*. It should seem, therefore, that neither of us can enter his plea of prescription, on this ground, as of divine right, in bar of the other. In this state the controversy must remain, till it can be proved that immersion is the *only legitimate* sense of the word βαπτίζω, (*baptize*) and that all other applications of that term are *spurious* and utterly unfounded. A task, impossible to be executed with success, *while the New Testament is in being*.

That you may be as fully satisfied in your own views, I admit, and readily allow the justice of your claim, so far as respects *your own* conduct. But surely neither of us can possess a right to judge, and censure the other as corrupting the worship of God, seeing we both revere the sacred scriptures as the supreme arbiter in this, and every other religious, controversy. Making, then, our appeal, respectively, to the highest tribunal, by what right can the petty courts of individual judgment, or ecclesiastical judicature interfere? Let each beware lest he merit the rebuke so wisely recorded for our common warning, "*Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth.*"—Rom. XIV. 4.

Bearing in mind the above cautionary admonition, I would now advert to the *subjects* of Baptism.—Here also I will be brief, giving you my thoughts in

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as few words as possible. Now, my good friend, however well satisfied in your opinion that *adults only*, upon their own personal profession of faith and repentance, are the proper subjects of that ordinance; and that the nature and constitution of the new Testament Church forbid its extension to *infants*; yet, I hope, you will find no difficulty in admitting that a christian brother may, *ex animo*, entertain very different apprehensions. Accordingly, you will patiently bear with him while he gives you his reasons in some such a way as this.—That his views of the apostolic commission to disciple all nations, baptizing them, convey to him the idea that wherever the apostles should preach the gospel with acceptance and success, they were to admit to baptism as many as professed to receive the truth; *them and their households*.—That in this opinion he is much confirmed by observing the nature of *Peter's* discourse on the day of Pentecost.—That the *promise** (by which he thinks the *Gospel* is designated, in its *full and free dispensation*) is proclaimed alike to Jew and Gentile, to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. *It is*, saith the apostle, *unto you and to your children*, and, therefore, *their children with them*, are brought under its gracious administration. That upon embracing it as the only ground of hope, and rule of *worship*, they and their infants are to

be baptized, and considered as belonging to the visible church of Christ. In this manner he thinks the gospel of the kingdom was to be preached in order to *disciple all nations, baptizing them.*—Advancing in the apostolic history, his convictions are greatly strengthened; for he learns, that as in Jesus Christ there is neither male nor female; so, wherever they preached with success, and persons believed their report, they *baptized them, whether they were men or women.* A circumstance, he observes, no where recorded in the history of *John's baptism.* And, moreover, that in either case, *where they were heads of families,* the apostles baptized them and their households. Thus *Lydia and her household; the Jailor and all his; Stephanas and his household,* are all instances, which he thinks in point; though he very well knows what has been advanced by some writers to establish the contrary. The arguments of these worthy men, although convincing to themselves, are not so to him; he must therefore differ, and he must avow that difference in his profession, or act the hypocrite. As the controversy must issue here, let us, my dear Sir, always bear in mind that weighty caution—*But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the Judgment-seat of Christ.* Rom. XIV. 10.

Permit me now to take a short view of the nature and constitution of the Church of God, so far as belongs

longs to the subject in hand. '*Religion*,' I admit, *is a personal thing*; but so it ever was, and always must be. This dictate of natural light is fully established by the voice of revelation. *It was as much so before the commencement of christianity, as since.* The state of society in the world, and the *form* of the church of God, can make no alteration in this principle.—To suppose, then, and to argue that the gospel dispensation introduces any, defaces all the beauty of the ancient temple, and converts the worship, and the church of God, under the old testament, into a mere carnal service, and the whole establishment thereof into nothing more than a political œconomy.

I think it is an indisputable maxim, that one part of revelation casts light upon another; and all together is one system of truth, displaying the gracious dealings of God with his church in all ages of the world. Now it appears that whatever changes have taken place in the *external administration* of the covenant of grace, a regard suited to the nature of the dispensation, has always been shewn to believers, professedly so, and their seed. That such was the case with that covenant to which circumcision was annexed, is placed beyond all doubt. That this covenant was the only ground of hope for eternal life to Abraham, and likewise to the Jewish church under the Mosaic œconomy, appears, at least to me, demonstrably evident. That all the ritual services, afterwards established, were shadows, the body of which is

Christ, is the plain sense of revelation : and as all these were to vanish away when the substance should approach, so it is a circumstance perfectly analogous to the gospel, that every thing of rigour, and of bondage, should cease. That some positive institutes, requisite to mark the visibility of the church, were proper to accompany this last and purest dispensation, hath been settled by our great and only law-giver Jesus Christ. And that these bear as much analogy to what formerly served to initiate members into the church, and to mark their standing there, as suits the nature of the different dispensations, is a circumstance that merits some attention. Males only belonged to the church of old, as to the administration of its ordinances—the sign of initiation was therefore appropriate. Such only partook of the passover as had been circumcised and kept the law.—Under the gospel, baptism initiates into the church; the Lord's supper is designed in its use, to mark the standing, and promote the spiritual growth of its members, who are not only to be baptized, but to keep the commandments of God. In Jesus Christ *there is neither male nor female*, but all are one, as to every thing which constitutes them equally fit members of his church.—Moreover, we not only read that *Christ our passover is sacrificed for us*, but also that we are circumcised with the *circumcision of Christ* ; which, surely, cannot respect his personal circumcision as a Jew, but, I should suppose, something *instituted* by him,

him, as head of the church, to *superfede* the use of that ancient rite, viz. *baptism*.—Col. II. 11, 12.

Now this co-incidence of two positive institutions belonging to the church of old, and to the christian dispensation, deserves, I think, our attentive regard. The former were both appointed *before the law** was given at Sinai, which regulated the *polity* and *government* of the old-testament church in the land of Canaan. All of which political and ceremonial laws are done away in Christ. The new testament enjoins only two, correspondent to the above, so far as the nature of the dispensations allows an agreement.—The *former* were perfectly suited to the state of the church at that time; the *latter* as perfectly to its state now.—These things, in my apprehension, shew the gracious dealings of God towards his people, from the beginning, in that order, connexion, and harmony, which make the *scriptures* appear *one whole system, gradually opening as the dawn of the morning, which shines more and more unto the perfect day*. Considerations of this sort, much strengthened by many things which occur in the New Testament, often stated in this controversy (and which I forbear to name, that I may not be tedious), assure me that

* And therefore were appendages to the administration of the covenant of Grace. Vid. John vii. 22. 1 Cor. v. 7. Gal. iii. 17.

there is nothing in the nature and form of the visible church of Christ subversive of Infant Baptism.—Nor any thing which makes immersion at any time, and *much less at all times* and in *all countries*, essential to the administration of the ordinance. You, my good friend, view the subject differently; but that this difference is of so great consequence as to prevent our cordially meeting at the Lord's table, I cannot admit, on any evidence that is yet before me. My reasons I will submit to your attention in a subsequent letter. In the mean time, I remain,

Dear Sir,

Sincerely your's.



LETTER II.

DEAR SIR,

WITH the utmost confidence in your candour, I proceed to introduce some observations on the subject of *Mixed Communion*. Now, admitting what I presume you will readily grant, viz. that a *Pædobaptist* may not only be of good moral character, but also make a very creditable and honourable profession of christianity, the question at issue respects the warrant, or *authority*, claimed by those *Anti-pædobaptists* who

who deny communion with such at the Lord's table. In examining this claim, which I have endeavoured to do with some attention, I must take the liberty to say, that the most which I have read on the subject, and particularly the whole of Mr. *Booth's Apology*, appears to me to rest upon a false and unwarrantable assumption. For though I readily grant that work is a very good species of the *argumentum ad hominem*, considered as addressed to those who argue for Mixed Communion, and yet assert there is no baptism but of adults, and by immersion;* nevertheless, to others who do not admit these premises, the arguments can by no means apply. Fully aware, therefore, that the wall of separation between them and us must fall, if it be not allowed that they are infallibly and exclusively right, viz. that theirs is baptism, and *theirs only*, this sentiment meets you at every turn; pervades the whole of that performance, and lies at the bottom of every argument. In page 70, Mr. B. addressing such of his brethren as practise mixed communion, asks, "*Into what* were the pædobaptist members of your church baptized? His answer, as a baptist, must be—Into nothing; for *I* do not consider them as baptized at all." And, surely, on the principles of Mr. *Booth*, his answer must be the same respecting an *adult* who had not been immersed, even though the said adult had, on his own personal pro-

* Vid. *Apology*, p. 53.

profession of faith and repentance, been baptized, in his own view, according to the practice of the apostles; "For," says our author, "it appears to us, on the most deliberate enquiry, that immersion is not a mere circumstance, or a mode of baptism, but *essential* to the ordinance; so that, in our judgment, he who is not immersed is not baptized. This is the principle on which we proceed, in refusing communion to our pædobaptist brethren."—p. 15.

"So that in *our* judgment." Let us pause, my good friend, and look at this sentence. I confess it appears to me, (connected with the reasoning which precedes and follows it) extremely improper.—'In *our* judgment he is not baptized:' Then, of *what use is his own?* He cannot be competent to judge, even for himself; for unless he is baptized *as we are*, "he is baptized into nothing!!!"—Pardon me, dear Sir, if I discover a little warmth. I own I cannot altogether repress my feelings. If, however, my inference be unjust, shew it me, and I will thank you. If it be founded, as I think it is, the assumption is too bold to pass without rebuke. It appears to me a direct attack on the principle of free enquiry, as it precludes the liberty of acting from personal conviction. Indeed, if granted to the full extent of the claim made, it amounts to a complete and entire surrender of our consciences, in this instance, to the discretion, or, rather let me say, to the *direction* of another. But let

us pass on, and hear how Mr. B. farther attempts to support this extraordinary claim. "Nor can we suppose," says he, "but they would act a similar part, were they in our situation. Were they fully persuaded, for instance, that the great Head of the Church had not commanded, nor any where authorised, his ministering servants to require a profession of faith prior to baptism; and were they *equally certain* that the ordinance never was administered by the apostles to any but infants, nor in any other way than that of aspersions or pouring, would they not look upon the immersion of professing believers as a quite different thing from baptism? And, were this the case, would they not consider us as unbaptized, and refuse to have communion with us on that account? I am persuaded they would, notwithstanding their affection for any of us, as believers in Jesus Christ." Now, permit me to ask, does not all this rest upon the principle *assumed*? Grant that *immersion only* is baptism, and that the antipædobaptists are *exclusively* right in what relates to that ordinance, and the conclusion drawn may be admitted; but deny, or question, these premises, and the matter is still at issue. Mr. B. is aware of this; yet thinks that pædobaptists allow enough to secure his argument.—"They in general," says he, "admit that immersion in the name of the triune God, on a profession of faith in Jesus Christ, is baptism, real baptism; while our fixed and avowed persuasion will not permit us to allow, that infant sprinkling,

sprinkling, though performed with the greatest solemnity, is worthy of the name. Consequently, though they, consistently with their own principles, may receive *us*, to communion among them, yet we cannot admit *them* to fellowship with us at the Lord's table, without contradicting our professed sentiments."

Mr. B. had been as near the truth, I think, if he had said, 'We cannot admit them to fellowship with us, without giving up our claim to being exclusively right.' This, in fact, is the claim made, though not directly couched in these terms. I feel, to be sure, a proper sense of obligation to Mr. B. in common with the pædobaptists, for the pains he hath taken to shew that our conduct is consistent; but at the same time I must remark, if the reasoning of that gentleman be correct and founded, it goes to prove that *we* have no right to the Lord's supper at all. For though we should even give up infant baptism, and so relinquish the term by which we are distinguished, yet receiving the rite of baptism without immersion, we are, nevertheless, whatever be our own apprehensions, baptized into nothing! This is a sweeping consequence! It clears the ground by one bold stroke, and levels all before it.

That men of feeble minds and of little thought should be able to express themselves in this manner, is not at all surprising: But that such a man as Mr.

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B. so respectable in a high degree, and whose praise is in so many of our churches ; that *he* should talk at such a rate, is to me astonishing beyond measure.

Notwithstanding I have already made my obligations to Mr. B. for his acknowledging our consistency in the matter of mixed communion, yet you will allow me, I hope, to add a few words of my own.— I beg, therefore, you will remember, that although the pædobaptists admit immersion to be baptism, “real baptism,” yet that they also believe themselves to be really baptized without it ; and do judge that the mode, or manner, which they practise, is a more proper way of administering that ordinance.— Yet, while such are their own views of the sense of scripture, they nevertheless most readily admit, that others may form different apprehensions on this subject, and act upon them with equal integrity and conscientiousness. While, therefore, it is granted that every man, who would approve himself unto God in the solemnities of his worship, must be *fully persuaded in his own mind*, that his conduct is grounded upon the authority of the New Testament ; I do and must contend that this vigorous and active principle, will secure all that is lovely in the service of God, without exacting that *uniformity* that Mr. B. and his worthy associates, so strenuously demand.— By this rule, this law of our conduct (regulated in our judgment by the doctrine of Christ and his apostles),

tles), I think it safe to abide. Our apologist, however, is very unwilling to allow that the claim of the pædobaptists stands on equal ground with his own.—“Were they,” says he, “*equally certain* that the ordinance never was administered by the apostles to any but infants;” i. e. as we are that it never was to any but adults! Is this reasoning? Is it not taking for granted the thing in debate? It is an assumption perfectly gratuitous, which involves in it a censure of no inconsiderable import. In some respects, it would be more ingenuous to say in terms direct and pointed, that ‘A pædobaptist cannot possess as much ability and integrity to examine the subject, and to act upon the result of his enquiries as his opponent.’—This might startle, but it would be open; there would be nothing of insinuation. This seems to be the direct and legitimate consequence of Mr. B.’s argument.—(It must be allowed that this is striking home. I presume such arguments have their effect upon some minds. They are frightened into a surrender.) I do not see how it can be viewed in any other light, and therefore I must take leave to say that I do think it very reprehensible.

I will now remind you of another argument used by Mr. B. in bar of mixed communion. “Are we bound,” says he, “to admit as a fact, what we verily believe to be a falsehood?”* Such an objection

* Idem, p. 97.

as this is of little weight, until the charge which it involves be substantiated. It derives all its force (if force it hath at all) from that gratuitous assumption so freely dealt out, as need required, through the whole of his apology. Allow him the exclusive claim of being right—admit that dipping is essential to baptism, and that *all others are baptized into nothing*, and it will follow of course, either that such have no right to the Lord's supper, or that baptism is no needful pre-requisite. Mr. B.'s argument may, perhaps, justify him in refusing a *quaker* (if such could desire admission to the Lord's supper) but against a pædobaptist it can have no weight, unless Mr. B. be allowed to judge not only for himself, but for his brother also. For my own part I must say, and I take pleasure in the declaration, that I do look upon mixed communion amongst christians, who agree in their dependence upon their common Lord, as giving the worthy example of mutual forbearance; attesting in the most solemn manner against all "*Bills of Uniformity*," which are framed to make all men think alike, or act the hypocrite in religious worship. Against this folly and falshood it is noble to bear our testimony. And I do also think it a reproach, that men who agree in their views of christianity, in all its most interesting and important points, should separate from one another, where the bond of union ought to be most closely cemented, and their love to their gracious and adored Lord, most devoutly and

publicly expressed. I am, moreover, particularly impressed with these ideas when I consider,—“It is freely allowed, that a mistake which relates merely to the mode and subject of baptism, is comparatively small.”

What can be fairly and fully argued in defence of this dis-uniting practice I am altogether unable to comprehend. I am, however, aware that some pædobaptists as well as antipædobaptists may conceive an objection of the following kind, against what I have advanced. They may say, that ‘This sort of reasoning goes too far, and therefore proving too much, proves nothing to the point; for it seems to go all the length of admitting to the Lord’s supper every one who should desire it, be his sentiments what they may. That this, therefore, would deprive every church of the right to exercise its own authority in matters of discipline and government.’ In reply to this objection, I beg leave to add, that I do most readily acknowledge christian churches possess that right, *as far as it is laid down in the New Testament*, and that they are under obligations to exercise it in obedience to their great and only Head, Jesus Christ. Every church is, surely, accountable to him for the observance of that discipline which he hath appointed, to promote their union to one another, in purity and peace. To express and inculcate subjection to his authority, and thereby increase in holiness
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and love, is the end of every divine institution.— That such are the leading sentiments contained in that first draught of the christian church, given in Matt. xviii. is, I presume, very plain. I think too that every subsequent account of the state of christian churches in the epistles is such as renders them the objects of rebuke, or of commendation, according as they cherished these principles, or departed from them. I apprehend likewise that there ought to be in christian churches such a communion of sentiment as belongs to what St Paul calls “*Holding the head even Christ.*” That is, acknowledging the Lord Jesus as the only head of authority, influence and divine communication. This is that important view of christianity which lies at the foundation of our hope— is the ground of all our confidence towards God—the source of our peace and consolation—the bond of spiritual union, whence all the members of the body, partaking of the same spiritual life, have fellowship one with another.

Now, surely, a difference in the views of baptism can never be placed on a footing of equal importance with the doctrine of the *atonement*? With persons who choose to take their stand on *that* ground, I have no controversy, because I frankly own that giving up the atonement, or treating it as what may be held, or denied with equal indifference, leaves, in
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my mind, nothing worth contending for, as to admission to the Lord's Table.—I therefore consider myself as arguing with those who professedly agree in that great and leading article of the christian faith ; and, bringing such only into the controversy, I cannot read one line in the scriptures which forbids me to receive into communion a brother in the Lord merely because he practises immersion in baptism, though I think affusion or pouring more agreeable to the sense of revelation, and denies it to infants, although I judge them proper subjects, any more than I can see that he is authorized to bid me stand by myself while he approach the table of the Lord.

With an ardent desire that the difference in our views on this subject may set us at no distance in cordial affection and esteem, I am,

Dear Sir,

Your's sincerely.

L E T T E R I I I .



DEAR SIR,

IN the *first* of the preceding letters you have a short statement of the views by which I am governed in my practice as a pædobaptist. In the *second* I laid before you a brief account of the claims made by our antipædobaptist brethren, as to their being exclusively right, and the manner in which they reason upon those claims as stated by *Mr. Booth* in his apology. The substance, so far as it applies to mixed communion, is this: ‘In their judgment we are not baptized, and therefore whatever we may be in our own, we can have no right to set down with them at the Lord’s table whilst this difference remains. Baptism must precede the Lord’s supper, and without immersion there is no baptism; therefore we are, and ought to be excluded.’ Now whether this be right, is still *sub judice lis*—the matter before the judge. I shall take leave in this letter to summon two witnesses. We ask no dominion over the faith of our brethren, and we think they should claim none over ours. The dispute indeed is not
about

about a subject that relates to the foundation of our common hope; it is merely about a rite, in respect to which we form different apprehensions. Both of us think we do our Master's will in the manner we perform that rite in his name: and I do verily apprehend we should act according to his word, by forbearing every thing which looks like *imposing* our own particular views on each other, and cordially meeting at that feast of love which he hath appointed and prepared for all his disciples.—*Drink ye all of it.*

In pleading for mixed communion I do think there is great weight in what the venerable old *pilgrim* urged in the following manner:—"When we attempt to force our brother beyond *his* light, or to break his heart with grief, to thrust him beyond *his faith*, or to bar him from his privilege, how can we say, I love?—Strange! Take two christians equal in all points but this, nay let one go beyond the other far for grace and holiness; yet this circumstance of water shall drown and sweep away all his excellencies, not counting him worthy of that reception that with hand and heart shall be given a novice in religion, because he consents to water."* I hope, my dear Sir, you will accept the assurance that I mean not hereby to insinuate that this is the case

* Vid. Bunyan's Works, vol. I. p. 143.

with *you*, or that I conceive your churches in general are more regardless of pure religion than of water-conformity. No; I believe real godliness is as much the object of many of your pastors and people as of any other that can be named. Yes, my good friend, I most cheerfully pay the tribute of my sincere and profound respect for such names as *Gill*, *Stennett*, *Pearce*, &c. &c. with many now living that I forbear to name. But surely it ought to be well considered, for it cannot be denied, that however circumspect any church may be as to the admission and standing of its members in fellowship, if they allow communion to none but such as are baptized "after their notion of it," they must exclude many that are, at least, equally distinguished as themselves for firmness in all other christian principles, and amiableness of moral character. Such a conduct requires, I think, strong ground to support it. Nothing short of some express warrant from plain precept, or apostolical example. As I cannot see that the New Testament affords either, I must bear my testimony against it as unwarrantable and injurious. Moreover, my objections are increased when I consider the light in which it is viewed by some bystanders, who fail not to make their own reflections, and eagerly catch at any thing which may seem to justify to them the determination to keep their distance, and maintain their separation from us in common.

Under these ideas I will venture to solicit your attention to one quotation more from this respectable *Old witness*—"And now I say again, the world may well wonder, when they see you deny holy men of God that liberty of the communion of saints which you monopolize to yourselves: and though they do not understand the grounds of profession, or communion, yet they can both see and say these holy men of God, in all visible acts of holiness, are not one inch behind you. Yea, I will put it to yourselves, if those many, yea, very many, whom thus severely you deny communion with, are not of as good, as holy, as unblameable a life, and as sound, if not sounder, in the faith, than many among ourselves? Here only they make the stop; they cannot, without light, be driven into water-baptism; *I mean after our notion of it.* But what if they were? It would be little sign to me that they were sincere with God.—To conclude this: when you have proved, that water-baptism is essential to church communion; and that the church may, by the word of God, bolt, bar, and for ever shut out, those far better than ourselves, that have not, *according to our notion*, been baptized with water; then it will be time enough to talk of ground for so doing. In the mean time I must take leave to tell you, there is not in all the Bible one syllable for such a practice; wherefore your great cry about your order is wordless, and therefore faithless, and *is a mere human invention.*"—Idem. p. 135.

Such

Such were the sentiments of the *christian pilgrim*: Nor was Mr. Bunyan single in maintaining the doctrine of mixed communion. It had other abettors also, among some of the first* and ablest of our antipædobaptist

* *Neal* says, that Mr. *Jessy* was Minister of the first Baptist congregation he had met with in England.

Hist. Purit. vol. i. p. 663.

The late Rev. *Robt. Robinson*, however, tells us, that in the year 1457, there was a congregation at *Chesterton*, part of which denied the baptism of Infants. Six of the congregation were accused of heresy, and, it seems, very roughly handled, according to the ecclesiastical tyranny of the times. Mr. R. shews that these six men, although all in one community, did not all hold the same articles.—“Does not this prove,” says he, “that they held a *mixt communion*.”

Vid. Essay on Claude, vol. ii. pref. p. 54.

Mr. *Crosby*, in his History of the English Baptists, states, that “It was not till the year 1633, that they discriminated themselves from other Dissenters, and formed themselves into *distinct societies*.”

Hist. of the Works of the Learned, vol. i. p. 75.

It seems to me very evident, that previous to this, mixed communion was practised, where no other distinction of sentiment prevailed, except that which related to Baptism.—*Crosby* names one which he styles a Baptist and Independent church, constituted in the year 1621, whose first pastor was a Mr. *Hubbard*—the second Mr. *John Cann*—the third Mr. *Samuel Howe*, who was a baptist, although his predecessors were not.—*Ibidem*. p. 79.

antipædobaptist brethren in this kingdom. The learned and very amiable Mr. *Jessy* pleaded strongly for the practice; and his judgment on the case is printed with Mr. *Bunyan's*. He argues from those words of the apostle, in Rom. ch. xiv. v. 1. *Such as are weak in the faith receive ye, &c.* Mr. *Jessy* considered that weakness of faith must mean either being weak in the graces of faith, or in the doctrine of faith; and though he conceives the first is included, yet he thinks the *second* is principally intended: and, according to this idea, apprehending it is a weakness, not so much in the doctrine of justification, as in gospel-institutions, he concludes that the sense of the passage amounts to a *command* that such ought to be received, not merely unto mutual affection, but into *church fellowship*. Mr. *Jessy* also, farther arguing on the subject, meets and answers fundry objections, which I forbear to detail because I wish to be very brief. I will take the liberty, however, to state his reply to what some objected against his sentiments from 1 Cor. xii. 13—*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles.* Some there are, says he,

I am strongly of opinion that the very unwarrantable heat, with which the controversy was afterwards handled, contributed so much to irritate the minds of each party, that this led, more than any thing else, to that separation which has since been supported by arguments framed to perpetuate the distinction, and, unhappily to fan the flame.

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who affirm this to be meant of water-baptism, and that particular churches are formed thereby, and all persons are to be admitted and joined unto such churches by water-baptism. To which he answers; That the baptism intended in the text is the Spirit's baptism, and not water-baptism; and that the *body* mentioned, is not principally the church at Corinth, but all believers, both Jews and Gentiles, being baptized into one mystical body, as Eph. iv. 4. There is *one body*, and *one Spirit*; wherein there is set out the *uniter* and the *united*: therefore in v. 3. they are exhorted to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The united are all the faithful in one body: Into whom? v. 5th says—In *one Lord* Jesus Christ. By what? *one faith*, *one baptism*; for water-baptism doth not unite all this body." Farther on he says, "By which mistake of setting up water-baptism in the Spirit's place, and assigning it a work which was never appointed unto it, of forming the body of Christ, either in general or as to particular churches of Christ, we may see the fruit, that instead of being the means of uniting as the Spirit doth, it hath not only rent his seamless coat, but divided his body which he hath purchased with his own blood."

I have introduced this last quotation purposely to shew how strong the argument in favour of mixed communion appeared to this good man, on the ground

ground of promoting christian love and unity. I forbear going further into detail.—The arguments at large of these two witnesses you may, if so disposed, consult at leisure. I do not, however, hold myself responsible for every thing advanced by them in the course of a long and warm debate. No doubt but some of them are indefensible ; and each of these venerable worthies hath received his rebuke from Mr. *Booth*: the good old *pilgrim* particularly comes in for a large share ; yet happily for him, it was not “until the moss had grown upon his eye-brows.”

Forbearing all farther examination of what these two worthy men have deposed on the subject before us, and omitting all reference to any other, that I may not be too prolix, I will now advert to the conclusion of the whole matter.—‘What benefit, you ask, would result from mixed communion being generally practised?’ I think much every way. It certainly would not militate against the spirit of free enquiry, nor damp the ardour of its researches after truth ; but it might contribute to soften down the asperities which too often sour the dispositions of angry polemics. It is founded on the doctrine of mutual forbearance ; a principle the gospel every where inculcates. But, as this duty is reciprocal, it can never be exercised where one only is disposed to give way. Whilst, then, the claim of being exclusively right, and every
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one else *fundamentally* wrong, is maintained with unyielding confidence, no fellowship, no union, can be effected. On that ground Mr. *Booth* is consistent with himself. But he, and those who take the same ground, ought not to be surpris'd, if such a conduct should operate upon liberal minds, both baptists and pædobaptists, as being uncandid, censorious and overbearing in a high degree. (Perhaps some will exclaim, *No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you!*) Yes, my friend, I must be free to say, That side of the question which places the arguments of a pædobaptist, on the level of those of a quaker, who rejects water-baptism altogether, appears to me so repugnant and so assuming, that I could as soon *kiss the toe of the man at Rome*, as give credence to such an extravagant hypothesis. Forgive me, if I once more seem to need an apology for expressing myself a little warmly. I do really think it an assumption, so void of all candour, so contrary to that self-diffidence and humility which the Gospel enjoins, that I cannot but "*wonder with great admiration,*" when I find it made by men of wisdom, erudition, and piety. The influence of such a principle upon professors whose means of information are more limited, is calculated to increase an ill-grounded confidence; and to beget, or cherish, in no small degree, a spirit of pride, arrogance, and presumption.

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We stand upon equal ground :*—we both reason as well as we can—we examine and compare spiritual things with spiritual. Our inferences and conclusions are not the same—a variety of things concur to produce this difference. Perhaps they have their foundation in the very frame and make of the mind ; at least in the early principles of our christian education ; in something which grows with our growth ; in different habits of thought ; associating our ideas in a train of reasoning upon some leading principle in the controversy, which carries with it those different consequences. Now, if through the weakness, or depravity, of the human mind, *there must be heresies* (diversities of opinion), *that they which are approved may be made manifest*, surely one of our first regards should be, to exemplify that temper of forbearance and love, which the New Tes-

* I must insist on this, although Mr. Booth lifts his foot on high, and exclaims—“What is there in a *false persuasion*, relating to *baptism*, that merits the regard of a *church* ?”—Such is the reply he deigned to make his opponent, who urged, “If my pædobaptist brother is satisfied in his *own mind* that he is rightly baptized, he is so to himself.”—Mr. B. modestly calls it a *false persuasion*. (vid. his *Apology*, p. 59.) Query ?—Was his opponent *fair*, when he charged him with destroying the right of private judgment, and going about to establish a *popish infallibility* against the liberty of the gospel ?

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tament so much inculcates, and which the Gospel, in its proper influence, so effectually works.

I have already exceeded the bounds I proposed to myself, or I might proceed to urge, in favour of the practice for which I contend, many advantages which I humbly conceive would result from it. I might name the peace of many individuals, and the harmony and union of many christian churches. These are interesting and important objects to the happiness of society, and the honour of the gospel. I must leave these considerations, however, to be dilated upon by your own good sense, and pious reflections; subjoining only as my concluding remarks, that could the object, for which I have here become an advocate, be accomplished, it would, in my opinion, contribute much to give a right direction to christian *zeal*.—It would make that truth which humbles the mind, purifies the heart, and forms the soul after the image of Christ, more entirely the object of our common pursuit. The pride of party would abate in proportion as the fuel which feeds it was diminished. The minds of young professors would be kept more upon the weightier matters of eternal life. The fond distinctions which swell their fame, or increase their numbers, would lose their fascinating influence. The salutary admonition of St. *Paul* would be felt, in all its bearings.—*Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the*
F *flesh?*

flesh? The end of the commandment, which is *charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned*, would, I think, be more effectually promoted, as one great cause of disaffection and distance would subside. *Envy, strife, evil surmisings, and perverse disputings*, would give place to something more worthy of the gospel, and its professors. It might greatly contribute to call forth that ancient observation, so honourable to the disciples of Christ—"See how these Christians love one another!"

I do not, indeed, urge that the practice of mixed communion is equally requisite in all places, but I do earnestly contend that the spirit and temper ought to be universal. The principles of the gospel, by which they have been made one in Christ, should unite them all in *one heart and one soul*. Acts, iv. 32. Under this benign influence, they might occasionally commune with each other, in their respective churches, in cities or large places, which afford that pleasing opportunity. In others (and there are many such in the country), where their numbers united are not considerable, and their means of supporting a separate interest extremely inadequate, much advantage, I think, would arise to the common cause, by the united energies, zeal, and affection, of each.—Thus, upon many accounts, I judge that mixed communion, wisely and well conducted,

would

would greatly tend to cherish christian love, advance the honour of the holy and peaceful religion of the gospel, and, consequently, subserve, in no small degree, to aid the interests of vital godliness.

Submitting these Thoughts to your candid perusal, and earnestly praying the blessing of God may attend them,

I am,

Dear Sir,

Affectionately your's.



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